

The Relationship between Happiness and Self-Esteem among Young Adults in Kozhikode

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Abstract

This study examines how happiness and self-esteem are related in young adults. It highlights the importance of promoting positive self-esteem and happiness for overall well-being. The scales used in this study were The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg (1965) as a 10 item self-report measure and Oxford Happiness Inventory Questionnaire developed by Michael Argyle and Hills (2002) as a 29- item scale. The study consists of 175 young adults of age 18- 25 both male (85) and female (90) from Calicut district of Kerala state. The participants belong to both urban and rural areas. A t-test and correlation analysis was conducted, revealing a significant positive correlation between happiness and self-esteem, suggesting that higher levels of happiness are associated with higher self-esteem. Notably, no significant differences were found in happiness and self-esteem levels across gender or locality. The findings underscore the importance of fostering positive self-esteem and happiness for overall well-being, highlighting the role of factors like social support, personal achievement, and coping mechanisms in promoting mental health. This study provides insights for developing interventions focused on building resilience, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence among young adults.

Keywords: happiness, self-esteem, young adults in Kozhikode, Rosenberg self-esteem Scale, Oxford Happiness inventory questionnaire, Kerala

Introduction

Young adulthood, typically ranging from ages 18 to 25, is a critical developmental stage marked by significant emotional and mental challenges. During this period, young adults are transitioning to adulthood, exploring their identities, and making important life decisions.

This stage involves significant changes as they navigate independence and growth. Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2000) introduced the concept of emerging adulthood, highlighting a phase of exploration and self-discovery that contrasts with traditional views of adulthood, which often focus on fixed milestones like marriage, career stability, and parenthood.

Many young adults struggle with stress, anxiety, and self-doubt due to various challenges. Social media, academic pressures, and economic uncertainty can negatively impact their mental health, relationships, education, and employment opportunities. Addressing the mental health impacts of social media is essential for supporting young adults' well-being. The emotional and mental states of young adults are shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external factors, which significantly influence their self-esteem and overall happiness. This paper explores the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among young adults and help to focus on promoting their well-being .

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how we think and feel about ourselves. It is our sense of self-worth and dignity. According to experts, self-esteem affects our success, relationships, happiness, motivation, and mental well-being. It is shaped by our experiences, society, and our own thoughts. Having good self-esteem can improve our overall quality of life. Self-esteem has two main parts: self-worth (how much you like yourself) and self-competence (how capable you think you are).

These two parts work together to shape your overall self-esteem. There are different types of self-esteem, including high, low, and inflated. People with healthy self-esteem tend to be more resilient and accepting of themselves. Key characteristics of self-esteem include stability, resilience, and self-acceptance. Having good self-esteem can help you cope with challenges and feel more confident in your abilities.

According to Piyush Nair and Dr. Sanjay Gosh (2022) findings of study that the self-esteem of young adults has been estimated in the present group and it may be concluded that females are showing greater self-esteem in comparison to male in the above-mentioned age group.

Jauhri, V. (2022) conducted study and discovered that young adults with higher self-esteem tend to experience greater happiness, suggesting that self-esteem is a significant predictor of

well-being. The study discusses the implications for mental health practices, emphasizing that interventions aimed at improving self-esteem could effectively enhance happiness in young adults.

Moreover, Aqsa Batool, Amna Ajmal and Shumaila Abid (2019) explain their study significant positive correlation between self-concept and self-esteem among university students. It was further revealed that there was significant difference on scores of self-concept however there was no significant difference between the scores of self-esteems. It therefore concluded that self-concept and self-esteem have positive relationship. Self-concept may be associated to gender.

Additionally, individuals with higher self-esteem exhibited greater optimism and happiness. So, the improve self-esteem could have a significant positive impact on mental health and life satisfaction (Doğan and Eryılmaz 2013). Similarly, Brown and Marshall (2001) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and emotion in their work, “Self-esteem and Emotion: Some Thoughts about Feelings”. The present research explored the nature of these relationships. Found that self-esteem is more closely associated with self-relevant emotional states, found that although several personality variables predicted participant’s emotional reactions to success and failure, and found that self-esteem predicted participant’s self-relevant emotional reactions to failure but not their non-self-relevant emotional

Happiness

Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "happiness" states that it is a simple one: "The state of being happy." Happiness is a state, not a trait; in other words, it is not a long-lasting, permanent feature or personality trait, but a more fleeting, changeable state (Oxford English Dictionary). Research suggests that there are three ways to approach happiness: through pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Positive psychology is concerned with the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life. These three orientations to happiness are associated with well-being. Person et al., (2005) conducted an internet study assessed three orientations to happiness- through pleasure, through engagement, and through meaning- and found that each of these three orientations was associated with life satisfaction. They also found that people who obtained low scores on all three orientations to happiness reported low satisfaction with their lives.

Happiness comes in two forms: short-term pleasure and long-term fulfillment. Research shows that things like income, health, relationships, and positive feelings contribute to overall happiness. Feeling good, being engaged in activities, having purpose, building strong relationships, and achieving goals all play a big role in making life more satisfying and meaningful.

In 2007, Sonja Lyubomirsky elaborates, happiness as "the

experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.” However, it is important to note that social and cultural factor also influence how we think about happiness. Happiness levels are also shaped by social groups, like families’ happier people increase the happiness of people around them (Christakis and Fowler 2007). Psychologists have identified several components that contribute to happiness, such as positive emotions, engagement, meaning, relationships, and accomplishments. Positive Emotions is experiencing emotions like joy, gratitude, and love is a core aspect of happiness (Fredrickson, 2001). Studies have found a strong link between self-esteem, happiness, and life satisfaction. Research in India showed that self-esteem is a key factor in happiness and life satisfaction among elderly individuals (Mrs. Harpreet Kaur Vilku and Dr. Sudarsan Behera 2019). Another study found that extroverted people tend to be happier because they participate more in social activities (Argyle & Lu 1990).

Research shows that self-esteem and happiness are closely linked. Studies have found that people with high self-esteem tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives. Self-esteem helps individuals feel good about themselves and their abilities, which can lead to greater happiness. Happiness, in turn, can provide immediate emotional relief and improve overall well-being. A balanced approach that nurtures both self-esteem and happiness is essential for young people's mental health and

development. By building self-esteem and promoting happiness, we can help young people lead healthier and more fulfilling lives. This paper explores the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among young adults, emphasizing the importance of promoting their well-being.

Needs and Significance of the Study

Understanding the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among young adults is crucial in today's fast-paced world, where mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and low self-worth are increasingly prevalent. This study is significant because it can provide valuable insights for enhancing emotional well-being among young adults, who face self-esteem challenges due to academic pressures and social media. The findings can also inform educational institutions and policymakers in designing effective programs and interventions that promote mental resilience, positive self-identity, and overall happiness among young adults. Furthermore, promoting self-esteem and happiness can lead to greater job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being, making this study a great contribution to the field of mental health and well-being.

Objectives

1. To examine gender differences in self-esteem and happiness among young adults.

2. To examine differences in self-esteem and happiness between urban and rural young adults.

Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between happiness and self-esteem among adults.
- H2: There will be a significant difference in happiness and self-esteem between male and female young adults.
- H3: There will be a significant difference in happiness and self-esteem between urban and rural young adults.

Participants

The study's participants consist of 175 young adults, both 85 males and 90 females, from the Kozhikode district of Kerala state. The mean age for males 20.01 (SD = 2.062), and for females, it was 20.36 (SD = 2.132). The participants belong to urban and rural areas. Urban and rural areas were operationalized based on self-reported residence in municipal corporation areas (urban) or panchayat areas (rural), following official Kerala government classifications.

Instruments

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a tool for assessing global self-esteem which was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg

in 1965. RSES is a widely used 10-item scale that measures global self-esteem using a 4-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) demonstrated excellent reliability and validity in its original validation studies (Rosenberg, 1965), with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 and strong internal consistency. Test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from 0.85 to 0.88 over a period of 2 weeks (Rosenberg, 1965; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) is a tool developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills in 1989 to assess an individual's happiness. It uses a 6-point scale, with items marked for reverse scoring. The OHQ has demonstrated high test-retest reliability (0.92) and excellent construct validity (0.94), making it a reliable measure of happiness.

Procedure

In the current study data were collected using two standardized measures while adhering to ethical guidelines. The experimenter then approached the participants as per their convenient day and time and data were collected online, with questions assessing the happiness and self-esteem. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire honestly and to the best of their ability. Ethical consideration was considered, with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality ensured. The data collection was completed successfully with the

help of convenient sampling and Google Forms. When the subjects completed answering the questionnaires, they were collected for scoring. Data analysis carried out in this study initially used Pearson's correlation and independent sample t-test. The results were computed, and conclusion was declared.

Result

Table 1. The correlation of happiness and self-esteem.

Variables	1. Happiness	2. Self-esteem
1. Happiness	1.000	.626**
2. Self-esteem	.626**	1.000

*** .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Table 1 shows the result of the correlation between Happiness and self-esteem. The score obtained was .626 ($p < 0.01$). Thus, the hypothesis was accepted. There is a correlation of .626 at the significant level of 0.01 between Happiness and self-esteem. The correlation of 0.626 is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$, within the range of significance).

Table 2. t-test of happiness and self-esteem between female and male.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Happiness	Female	90	116.21	15.966	0.452	.130
	Male	85	115.02	18.769		
Self-esteem	Female	90	26.10	3.094	0.503	.126
	Male	85	25.85	3.557		

Table 2 demonstrates the result of t test in happiness and self-esteem among males and females, with the 90 females and 85 males, respectively. 116.21 and 115.02 are the mean values obtained from happiness. The significant value of happiness .130 at a significant level of 0.01. The mean value obtained from Self-esteem is 26.10 and 25.85. The significant value was .126 at a significance level of 0.01. The results show no significant difference in happiness ($p = 0.130$) and self-esteem ($p = 0.126$) between male and female young adults, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3. t-test of happiness and self-esteem among urban and rural.

Variable	Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Happiness	Urban	67	114.63	15.632	-0.604	.133
	Rural	108	116.26	18.369		
Self-esteem	Urban	67	25.55	3.426	-1.337	.527
	Rural	108	26.24	3.241		

Table 3 demonstrates the result of t-test in happiness and self-esteem among urban and rural, with the 67 urban and 108 rural, respectively. 114.63 and 116.26 are the mean values obtained from happiness. The significant value of happiness .133 at a significant level of 0.01. The mean value obtained from Self-esteem is 25.55 and 26.24. The significant value was .527 at a significance level of 0.01. The results show no significant difference in happiness ($p = .133$) and the self-esteem ($p = .527$) between urban and rural young adults, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion

The study's first hypothesis suggests that among young adults, will be a significant relationship between happiness and self-esteem. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between happiness and self-esteem. People with high self-esteem tend to have a positive self-image and greater confidence, which enhances their ability to cope with challenges, maintain healthier relationships, and pursue personal goals—all of which contribute to higher levels of happiness. As noted by Kumari, V., Kumar, D., & Kumar, D. (2025, April- June), the study found significant correlations between happiness and personality traits, including positive associations with extraversion and openness, and negative associations with neuroticism and conscientiousness, while also highlighting the predictive role of self-esteem in fostering happiness. In contrast, low self-esteem often leads to self-doubt, negative self-talk, and vulnerability to stress and anxiety, diminishing happiness. This relationship implies that efforts to improve self-esteem, such as practicing self-compassion and recognizing personal strengths, can play a crucial role in enhancing overall happiness.

The second hypothesis according to the research, the finding that there is no significant difference between happiness and self-esteem among males and females, indicating these psychological traits are influenced more by individual factors than by gender (Verma & Jha, 2022) Happiness, often linked to life

satisfaction and positive emotions, and self-esteem, which reflects one's self-worth and confidence, are shaped by personal experiences, values, and environmental factors rather than inherent gender differences. It highlights the importance of focusing on universal factors such as social support, personal achievements, and coping mechanisms in enhancing both happiness and self-esteem across genders.

Finally, the third hypothesis in the current study declares that among urban and rural, a difference between happiness and Self-esteem will be significant. The result shows that there is no significant difference between happiness and self-esteem among urban and rural populations suggests that geographical location may not be a decisive factor in influencing these psychological traits. Contrast with earlier research to patel et al. (2001) that found urban young adults had higher happiness and self-esteem, while rural youth had stronger community bonds but lower self-esteem. The difference in findings may be attributed to population-specific characteristics like regional cultural values, socio economic shifts and individual difference like personality traits, coping mechanisms, indicating happiness and self-esteem are influenced by a complex interplay of factors. Despite differences in lifestyle, resources, and socio-economic conditions, individuals in both urban and rural areas may find similar levels of happiness and self-esteem through distinct yet equally fulfilling means. For instance, while urban residents might derive self-esteem from career

achievements and social networks, rural residents might find it in community bonds and a simpler lifestyle.

Conclusion

The present study reveals a statistically significant positive correlation between happiness and self-esteem among young adults, indicating that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem tend to experience greater happiness. However, within this sample, no significant differences in happiness and self-esteem were observed across gender or residential location (urban vs. rural). These findings suggest that, in this specific context, environmental and gender-related factors may not be primary determinants of happiness and self-esteem, underscoring the influence of individual-specific factors. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of self-esteem in promoting happiness, while also suggesting that certain demographic factors do not significantly impact these psychological attributes. These findings have implications for interventions and strategies aimed at promoting happiness and self-esteem among young adults, focusing on universal factors such as social support, personal achievements, and coping mechanisms. Future research may explore other variables that could contribute to variations in happiness and self-esteem, such as personality traits, social support, and life experiences.

Implications

The current study's findings suggest significant implications for workplaces, and personal development. In the workplace, implementing policies that promote mental well-being, stress management, and equitable opportunities can enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. The study emphasizes building resilience, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence for mental well-being and career growth through continuous learning and skills development.

Moreover, adopting universal approaches that address individual needs and using community resources bonds can be effective across genders and geographical locations, ultimately informing strategies for promoting mental well-being and happiness.

Limitations of the study

The following are a few of the study's limitations. It was a quantitative study in future this study can be conducted in qualitative mode. The study was conducted in a limited area, in a district in Kerala. In future it can be conducted across India. Cultural, personal, and environmental influences were not fully controlled, so the data may have limited as per the sample's characteristics.

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